



12TH DISTRICT ADVISORY NEWSLETTER

Winter 2005

Congressman Mel Watt

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Mel's Comments: The Iraq War

I am resigned to the reality that there is no position I can take on the Iraq War that will satisfy all of my constituents. Regardless of where individual constituents stood on whether the U.S. should go to war in Iraq in the first place, some of my constituents now believe we should stay the course until "victory" is achieved, others believe that we have an obligation to assure a degree of "stability" in Iraq before withdrawing our troops and others believe our troops should be withdrawn "immediately, if not sooner." In this context, let me reiterate the following principles that I have consistently stated:

- In October 2002, before I voted against the war resolution, I issued a press statement that opposed "a unilateral, first-strike action by the United States without a clearly demonstrated and imminent threat of attack on the United States," urged that "every conceivable diplomatic option be exhausted" short of war and warned that "any post-strike plan for maintaining stability in Iraq would be costly and require a long-term commitment."
- In November 2003, before voting against the President's request for an additional \$87 billion to pursue continuing operations in Iraq, I issued a statement expressing 8 points of concern, the final one of which called on the President to "provide details of the criteria he will expect to be met before bringing U.S. troops home and of his exit strategy."
- In the recent debate of November 2005, my statement on the floor of the House called on the President to submit to Congress a detailed plan to redeploy U.S. forces "at the earliest practicable date," to accelerate the training of Iraqi security forces to prepare the Iraqi government to accept full responsibility for Iraq's internal security, to incorporate the United Nations and others in the transition and reconstruction process, to pursue security and stability through diplomatic and economic means and to ensure full support of service and health care benefits to our military families and veterans.

Full copies of the above statements are available from my office. In these difficult times, I still think the above principles have been sound.

HOUSE UPDATE

Since our last Newsletter, the following bills have passed the House:

- H.R. 3199, USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005. *Mel voted no.*
- H.R. 3283, United States Trade Rights Enforcement Act. *Mel voted no.*
- H.R. 3423, Medical Device User Fee Stabilization Act of 2005. *Passed in the House by voice vote and signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3645, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act approving \$10.5 billion to Meet Immediate Needs Arising From Hurricane Katrina. *Passed in the House by voice vote and signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3668, Student Grant Hurricane and Disaster Relief Act. *Mel voted yes and the bill was signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3669, National Flood Insurance Program Enhanced Borrowing Authority Act of 2005. *Mel voted yes and the bill was signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3672, TANF Emergency Response and Recovery Act of 2005. *Passed in the House by voice vote and signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3673, Second Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act approving \$52 billion to Meet Immediate Needs Arising From Hurricane Katrina. *Mel voted yes and the bill was signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3736, Katrina Volunteer Protection Act of 2005. *Passed in the House by voice vote.*
- H.R. 3768, Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act of 2005. *Passed in the House by voice vote and signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3784, Higher Education Extension Act of 2005. *Passed in the House by voice vote and signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3824, Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act of 2005. *Mel voted no.*
- H.R. 3827, Immigration Relief for Hurricane Katrina Victims Act of 2005. *Passed in the House by voice vote.*
- H.R. 3863, Natural Disaster Student Aid Fairness Act. *Passed in the House by voice vote and signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3864, Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Affected by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita Act of 2005. *Passed in the House by voice vote and signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 3893, Gasoline for America's Security Act of 2005. *Mel voted no.*
- H.R. 3894, Hurricane Katrina Emergency Housing Act of 2005. *Mel voted yes.*
- H.R. 3895, Rural Housing Hurricane Relief Act of 2005. *Mel voted yes.*
- H.R. 3896, Hurricane Katrina Emergency Relief CDBG Flexibility Act of 2005. *Mel voted yes.*
- H.R. 3945, Hurricane Katrina Financial Services Relief Act of 2005. *Mel voted yes.*
- H.R. 3971, Qualified Individual, Transitional Medical Assistance and Abstinence Programs Extension and Hurricane Katrina Unemployment Relief Act of 2005. *Passed in the House by voice vote and signed into law by the President.*
- H.R. 4061, Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Management Improvement Act of 2005. *Mel voted yes*

COMMITTEE UPDATE

Financial Services Committee

Since our last Newsletter the Financial Services Committee favorably reported the following bills to the House:

- H.R. 3909, The Hurricane Check Cashing Relief Act of 2005 (reported by voice vote);
- H.R. 4133, National Flood Insurance Program Further Enhanced Borrowing Authority Act of 2005 (reported by voice vote);
- H.R. 4146, Hurricanes Rita and Wilma Financial Services Relief Act of 2005 (reported by voice vote);
- Recommendations of the Committee on Financial Services for Reconciliation for FY06: Deposit Insurance Reform (reported by voice vote) and
- Recommendations of the Committee on Financial Services for Reconciliation for FY06: FHA Asset Disposition (reported by voice vote).

Since our last Newsletter:

- The Financial Services Committee has also held a number of hearings, including hearings on the impact Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had on the financial institutions in the Gulf Coast region.
- The House passed H.R. 1461, The Federal Housing Finance Reform Act of 2005, that would create a regulator for the Government Sponsored Enterprises by a vote of 331 to 90. The bill has not yet been considered by the Senate's Banking, Housing and Urban Development Committee.

Judiciary Committee

Since our last Newsletter some of the bills the Judiciary Committee favorably reported to the House include:

- H.R. 1400, Securing Aircraft Cockpits Against Lasers Act of 2005 (*reported by voice vote*);
- H.R. 1751, Secure Access to Justice and Court Protection Act of 2005, by a vote of 26-5 (*Mel voted no*);
- H.R. 3648, To impose additional fees with respect to immigration services for intracompany transferees, by a vote of 20-6 (*Mel voted yes*);
- H.R. 1065, United States Boxing Commission Act (*reported by voice vote*); and
- H.R. 4093, Federal Judgeship and Administrative Efficiency Act of 2005, by a vote of 22-12 (*Mel voted no*).

The Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law, on which Mel is the ranking Democrat, held hearings on H.R. 1956, the Business Activity Tax Simplification Act of 2005, H.R. 1369, To Prevent Certain Discriminatory Taxation of Interstate Natural Gas Pipeline Property, and an oversight hearing on the "Administrative Law, Process and Procedure Project," a bipartisan effort to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the administrative law process.

The Subcommittee on the Constitution, on which Mel serves, held ten hearings on the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act and a hearing entitled the "Supreme Court's Kelo Decision and Potential Congressional Responses".

For more information about Committee hearings, bills that have passed or been reported to the House or Mel's votes on them, please contact our office.

VA Alert



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has issued a news release warning veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information. The callers, identifying themselves as working for the Patient Care Group, try to persuade veterans that the VA needs their credit card number to continue receiving medication through the VA. According to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the VA has not changed its process for dispensing prescriptions and does not call veterans and ask them to release personal financial information over the phone. Veterans needing information about VA services should contact the nearest VA medical center or call the VA toll-free number, 1-877-222-8387.

Barbara Jordan Health Policy Scholars Program

The Barbara Jordan Health Policy Scholars Program brings talented African American, Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian/Pacific Islander college seniors and recent graduates to Washington, D.C., where they are placed in Congressional offices. Through the nine-week program (May 23- July 28, 2006), Scholars gain knowledge about federal legislative procedure and health policy issues, while further developing their critical thinking and leadership skills. In addition to gaining experience in a Congressional office, Scholars participate in seminars and site visits to augment their knowledge of health care issues and write and present a health policy research memo. Candidates are selected based on academic performance, interest in health policy, demonstrated leadership potential and community involvement. Scholars receive approximately \$7,000 in support, which includes a stipend of \$1,500 upon completion of the program, a daily expense allowance for meals and local transportation, transportation/airfare to and from Washington, D.C. and lodging at Howard University in Washington, D.C. For further information and to download an application for the 2006 Barbara Jordan Health Policy Scholars Program, visit: <http://www.kff.org/about/jordanscholars.cfm>. **The application deadline is January 9, 2006; however, applications will be processed and reviewed as they are received.**

Hurricane Contracting Information Center

The Hurricane Contracting Information Center (HCIC) provides a central point of reference for businesses, especially minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses and small- and medium-size enterprises, to register for and become aware of federal contracting opportunities in the Gulf Coast. While the HCIC does not award contracts, its mission is to ensure that businesses understand the process and are aware when opportunities become available. More information is available at <http://www.rebuildingthegulfcoast.gov/>.

GRANTS AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Children's Environmental Health Awards Program: In the October 27, 2005 *Federal Register* the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the launch of the Children's Environmental Health Awards Program. The awards are designed to increase awareness, stimulate activity and recognize efforts to protect children from environmental health risks at the local, regional, national and international level. The Award is divided into five categories (Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, Corporate, Individual and K-12 and Higher Education) and applicants may apply under only one category. ***The application deadline is December 15, 2005.*** Application forms and instructions are available at <http://yosemite.epa.gov/ochp/ochpweb.nsf/content/news2.htm#cehawards>. For further information, contact Carolyn Hubbard, Office of Children's Health Protection, USEPA, MC 1107A, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20460, (202) 564-2188, hubbard.carolyn@epa.gov.

Mainstream Housing Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Program: In the November 2, 2005 *Federal Register* the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Public and Indian Housing announced the availability of funding for the Mainstream Housing Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Program (*Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* number 14.871, funding opportunity number FR-5002-N-01). The purpose of this Program is to provide vouchers under the Housing Choice Voucher Program to enable persons with disabilities (elderly and non-elderly) to access affordable private housing. ***The application deadline is January 3, 2006.*** Public housing agencies and nonprofit organizations that provide services to the disabled are eligible to apply. Application forms and instructions are available at <http://www.grants.gov>. For further information, contact George C. Hendrickson, Housing Program Specialist, Room 4214, Office of Public Housing and Voucher Programs, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street SW, Washington, DC 20410, (202) 708-0477, ext. 4064.

Talent Search Program: In the November 14, 2005 *Federal Register* the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education announced the availability of funding for the Talent Search (TS) Program (*Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* number 84.044A). The purpose of the TS Program is to identify qualified youth with potential for postsecondary education and encourage them to complete secondary school and undertake a program of postsecondary education. TS projects also publicize the availability of student financial assistance for persons who seek to pursue postsecondary education and encourage persons who started but did not complete programs at the secondary or postsecondary level to reenter these programs. ***The application deadline is January 6, 2006.*** Institutions of higher education, public or private agencies or organizations and combinations of institutions, agencies and organizations are eligible to apply. To request an application package or for further information, contact Loretta Brown or Craig Pooler, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street NW, Suite 7000, Washington, DC 20006-8510, (202) 502-7600, TRIO@ed.gov.


Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training Projects: In the November 15, 2005 *Federal Register* the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services announced the availability of funding for the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects and Centers Program - Advanced Rehabilitation Research Training (ARRT) Projects (*Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* number 84.133P). The purpose of this program is to provide research training and experience at an advanced level to individuals with doctorates or similar advanced degrees who have clinical or other relevant experience. ***The application deadline is January 17, 2006.*** Institutions of higher education are eligible to apply. To request an application package, contact the Education Publications Center, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398, (877) 433-7827, fax (301) 470-1244, TDD, (877) 576-7734, <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html>, <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps/index.html>, edpubs@inet.ed.gov. For further information, contact Donna Nangle, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, room 6030, Potomac Center Plaza, Washington, DC 20202, (202) 245-7462 donna.nangle@ed.gov.


SATELLITE OFFICES

Schedule

In order to provide convenient services to all constituents in the 12th District, my staff maintains regular office hours in municipal offices throughout the 12th district. The schedule for December, January and February is as follows:

DECEMBER			
			1 Rowan
5 Forsyth	6 Davidson Guilford	7 Forsyth	8 Rowan
12 Forsyth Mecklenburg	13	14 Forsyth	15 Rowan
19 Forsyth	20 Davidson Guilford	21 Forsyth	22 Rowan
26 Forsyth Mecklenburg	27	28 Forsyth	29 Rowan

JANUARY			
2 Forsyth	3 Davidson Guilford	4 Forsyth	5 Rowan
9 Forsyth Mecklenburg	10	11 Forsyth	12 Rowan
16 	17 Davidson Guilford	18 Forsyth	19 Rowan
23 Forsyth Mecklenburg Cabarrus	24	25 Forsyth	26 Rowan

FEBRUARY			
30 Forsyth	31	1 Forsyth	2 Rowan
6 Forsyth	7 Davidson Guilford	8 Forsyth	9 Rowan
13 Forsyth Mecklenburg	14	15 Forsyth	16 Rowan
20 	21 Davidson Guilford	22 Forsyth	23 Rowan
27 Forsyth Mecklenburg Cabarrus	28		

Locations

CABARRUS COUNTY

9000 Aviation Blvd., Concord, NC
12p-2p

FORSYTH COUNTY

2301 N. Patterson Ave., Winston-Salem, NC
9a-5p

MECKLENBURG COUNTY

216 S. Main St., Davidson, NC
9a-11a

DAVIDSON AND GUILFORD COUNTIES

28 West Center St., Lexington, NC
9a-11a

10 Salem St., Thomasville, NC
11:30a-1:30p

211 South Hamilton St., High Point, NC
2:30p-4:30p

ROWAN COUNTY

130 W. Innes St., Salisbury, NC
9a-5p